

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL DIMENSIONS TO SMRITI

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ABSTRACT

The concept of *Smriti* has been vividly explained in the classical text but not much work has been done to understand it. The paper will discuss the characteristics of memory and relate it with concept of *Smriti* as explained in the classical texts. The power of the mind to retain and reproduce what is learnt is called memory. Memory revolves around the concept of mind and other perspectives which is the *karya* (cause) to bring about the *karana*(karana) that is attainment of a good memory. Body and mind constantly interact with each other. Thus an approach to understand *smriti* has to be done in two angles – the psychological and physical aspects. The psychological aspects like *Atma, mana, buddhi* and *moksha*. The physical aspects like the concepts on *dosha, sara, prakruti*, onset of diseases and in the treatment point of view. The paper attempts to explain the psychological and physical aspects of *Smriti*.

Key words: *smriti*, memory, *atma, manas, buddhi, dosas, prakruti*.

INTRODUCTION

While contemplating the objects of senses a person develops attachment for them and from such attachments lust develops and from lust anger arises. From anger complete delusion arises and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered intelligence is lost and when intelligence is lost one falls down again into the materialistic pool. The importance given to *smriti* in the ancient scripture is evident from the above lines¹.

Acharyas have differentiated the body and mind as two independent entities with significant interaction between them. Not only they associate with each other but also mutually contribute and complement the other's cause. Approach of *Ayurveda* from the evolution to the dissolution exhibits what can be conveniently termed as a psychosomatic or psychophysical approach. *Smriti* can be well understood by analysing these two phenomena –psychological and

physical aspect. The concept of *smriti* has been discussed in various classical texts in many different ways. *Smriti* is described as one among the eight *aishwaryas* which is possible only through the concentration of pure mind². *Smriti* is remembrance of things which are directly perceived, heard or experienced earlier³.

PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SMRITI

The methodology applied to attain the knowledge is as follows⁴ supreme soul conjugates with mind ; mind with respective sense organs ultimately attaining the objective of acquiring knowledge. The knowledge thus acquainted can be reproduced only if one has the ability to recollect the piece of information acquired.

The *Atma* transmigrates from one body to another along with the four subtle *bhutas* with the help of *mana*. This being

guided by the associated past actions⁵. *Atma* is beyond any sensory perceptions. *Atma* after entering into the body by its association with *buddhi* gets involved in attachment⁶. The dissimilarity in the shape and intellectual faculties is caused by the *rajas*, *tamas* and the nature of the past actions⁷. The four factors which are responsible for the mental faculty of the progeny are the mental faculty of parents, the sounds repeatedly heard by the pregnant mother, actions performed by the embryo in his previous life and frequent desires for a particular type of mental faculty by the progeny in his previous life. These are mentioned as the reasons for the variability in the psychic temperaments among the individuals⁸.

The factors responsible for procreation as in the *shad garbhakara bhavas* ; *Smriti* is a factor derived from both *atma*⁹ and *satva*¹⁰. The statement that ‘manifestation of *manas* occurs during 5th month of pregnancy in the foetal body’ indicates the coexistent nature of mind and body¹¹. *Smriti* is an attribute destined to *atma*¹² or *smriti* is one among the 16 qualities that are told as the proof for the existence of *atma*¹³. But the *atma* relevant to this context is known as the *Jivatma*.

For attaining the ultimate goal of an individual that is *moksha*, the regimens like due devotion to noble souls, shunning of the company of the wicked, observing sacred vows and fast, pursuit of the rules of good conduct, compliance with scriptural prescriptions, scriptural knowledge, liking for lonely living, detachment from the objects of senses, striving for *moksha* and absolute mental control are highlighted which serves as an aid to good memory. If one remembers the real nature of things he

gets rid of miseries¹⁴. The power of metaphysical memory constitutes the best way of liberation as shown by the liberated ones. Persons following this way do not come back to worldly traps. This again is the best way to the attainment of *moksha*¹⁵.

PHYSICAL APPROACH TO *SMRITI*

Doshas are the functional representatives of our body. *Vata* is the main dosha that gives stimulation to mind for its normal functioning and also controls its activities. The main *dosha* involved for the process of attaining *smriti* is *udana vata* residing in the *moordha* and *ura*¹⁶. The other types of *dosha* contributing to this cause - *Prana vata* residing in the *ura* maintains the proper activity of *buddhi*, *mana* and *indriya*¹⁷. *Sadhaka pitta* residing in *hrdaya* is responsible for the proper functioning of *buddhi* and *mana*. *Tarpaka kapha* residing in head provides nourishment and protection to centres of sense organs in the brain and it keeps the control of *vata* in the brain¹⁸.

Among the eight *sara* described, *twak sara purusha* is said to have a high intellect and *sattva sara purusha* is endowed with good memory¹⁹. According to *Sarangadhara Balyam*, *Vrdhi*, *Chavi*, *Medha*, *Twak*, *Drusti*, *Sukra*, *Buddhi*, *Karmaindriya*, spiritual life-these get deteriorated in successive decades²⁰. Which explains that *Medha* gets hampered after 40yrs and *buddhi* gets hampered after 80yr. Acharyas have quoted that during the old age there is diminution in *Grahana* (power of understanding), *Dharana* (power of retention), *Smarana* (power of memorising) and *Vachana* (power of speech)²¹. With respect to *smriti* in different *deha prakruthi* Acharyas have mentioned different variations. As in *vata prakruthi* they are

alpa smruta and *sruta grahi*²² and have *chala smriti*²³. *Pitta prakruthi* individuals are considered to be *medhavi*²⁴. In *kapha prakruthi* individuals, they are *chiragrahi*²⁵ and *smrutiman*²⁶. With respect to *manasa prakruit* it is told that those possessing *satwika prakruti* is endowed with good memory²⁷.

One among the three principal and fundamental causative agents in the manifestation of diseases in general as postulated in Ayurveda is *prajnaparadha*²⁸. In such circumstances, the memory will have to be nullified by diverting the mind with the desirable, variegated and surprising incidents. The memory goes astray due to the person being overcome by *Rajas* and *Tamas*, the two factors responsible for psychological disorders. *Smriti* is implicated specifically in two major psychological disorders like insanity (*unmada*) and epilepsy (*apasmara*). In *unmada*, it is perverted *smriti* (*smritibhramsa*)²⁹ while in *apasmara* there is momentary departure of *smriti* (*smritinasa*)³⁰

Memory is counted among the four qualities to be possessed by the patient which serve as an aid to a successful treatment³¹. True to its tradition, Ayurveda has applied the concept of *smriti* in the management of diseased states. It is considered one among the major therapeutic approaches in psychological disturbances³². *Smriti* is also implicated in the prevention of exogenous diseases³³.

DISCUSSION

Smriti is the remembrance of events that is directly perceived, heard or experienced earlier. Out of all sense organs for knowledge perception most important are visual and auditory knowledge. Without having either of these perceptions normally one couldn't acquire proper knowledge. Three occipito temporal areas in the ventral

object of vision pathway had mostly transient response to stimuli, indicating their predominant role in perceptual processing. Probably may be due to these reasons *Acharyas* made stress upon these two perceptions i.e. visual and auditory specifically. In modern science if we are considering sensory cortical areas of brain it performs mainly on the basis of three perceptions as our *Acharyas* have told.

Smriti as a mental faculty: *Chakrapani* while explaining the proof for existence of *Atma* states that *chetana*, *dhrti*, *smriti* and *ahamkara* are the types of *budhi*. For the *Atma* to get the perception after entering the body it should have the association of *budhi*. This in turn highlights that *smriti* is also a component to bring about the attachment. Also *Cakrapani* in another context states *uhapohavicara* and *smriti* have been termed as *buddhi*. So, it is obvious that without *Smriti*, the function of *Buddhi* is impossible. Function of *Buddhi* cannot occur without *uhapoha* and *vichara*, which comes through *smriti* or past experiences.

Acharyas have explained about the methodology to attain knowledge. In the contemporary science, memory is the processes by which information is encoded, stored, and retrieved. Encoding allows information that is from the outside world to reach our senses in the forms of chemical and physical stimuli. In this first stage we must change the information so that we may put the memory into the encoding process. Storage is the second memory stage or process. This entails that we maintain information over periods of time. Finally the third process is retrieval of information that we have stored. We must locate it and return it to our consciousness. This whole process can be related to the attainment of knowledge or *jnana*.

Budhi is an instrument for the *atma* for attachment. In the contemporary science, there is substantial evidence that foetal memory exists within the first and

second trimester after conception when the egg is fertilized. Evidence of this has been found as early as 30 weeks after conception. Foetal memory is important for parental recognition, and facilitates the bond between child and parents. This form of memory is important for a type of development known as attachment. Foetal memory is thus critical to the survival of the foetus both prenatally and after birth as an infant.

It is worth considering the relation of *Mana*, *Buddhi*, *Dhi*, *Dhriti* and *Smriti* with each other. In the process of knowledge, these are interrelated with each other. *Mana* is the entity that associates with *Atma* for the proper cognition. *Budhi* decides and bifurcates the *hita* and *ahita*. *Dhi* is the capacity or power of retention. *Dhriti* is the power that controls the orientation of attitude. While *Smriti* helps the mind in recollecting the entire percept or experimented objects on the basis of the concept formed by past experiences. If anyone of these is hampered the ultimate objective of attaining knowledge cannot be reached.

Smriti and the relation with foetus: *Acharys* have quoted that in the formation of *garbha*, *mana* is formed in the fifth month. In the contemporary view, the Central Nervous System (CNS) and memory in the foetus develop from the ectoderm following fertilization via a process called neurulation. The ectoderm is the outermost layer of the embryo. This happens towards the end of the third week of gestation and ends with the start of the development of the neural tube, an important structure crucial to development of the central nervous system. Some evidence suggests memory is actually responsible for carrying out the development of the CNS during neurulation.

With respect to relation between *dosa* and *smriti* with its contemporary view, *Udana vata* is mainly responsible for the *smriti* along with the involvement of all other *doshas*. In the contemporary science, the main centres in the brain is hippocam-

pus; it processes new memories for long-term storage. Brain areas involved in the neuroanatomy of memory such as the hippocampus, the amygdala, the striatum, or the mammillary bodies are thought to be involved in specific types of memory. The *Dharana* and *Smarana* are both functions of basal ganglia cells (hippocampus) and many researches support the role of acetylcholine in the memory functions. The term *Vachana* may not simply refer articular speech here but rather the capacity for power of expression of mental concepts and seems to relate with memory.

CONCLUSION

Smriti is sort of imprints of previous experience of a person which helps the individual to recollect or remember the facts experienced. At the psychological level, *smriti* is well understood through the concepts like *atma*, *manas* and *indriyas* as a means to attain knowledge and for liberation. *Smriti* helps the mind in recollecting the entire percept or experimented objects on the basis of the concept formed by past experiences. At the physical level, *Smriti* is well understood through the concepts like *dosha*, *sara*, *prakruti*, deterioration of *smriti*, onset of diseases and in its treatment aspect. The entities like *dosha*, *sara* and *prakruti* can be related to physiological aspects and as the cause for disease can be related to the pathological aspect. These psychological and physical faculties are interlinked with each other and derangement of any of these will reflect on other.

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